

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

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Historic Structures Report

by:

Restoration Associates  
a division of  
Solomon Claybaugh Young Architects Inc.  
20 West 9th Street Kansas City, Missouri 64105

for:

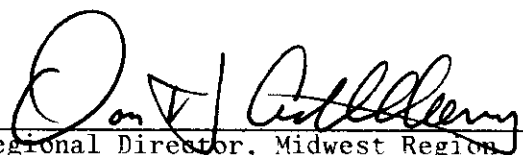
Office of Planning & Resource Preservation  
Division of Cultural Resources Management  
National Park Service  
United States Department of the Interior  
Omaha, Nebraska

Recommended:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent Harry S Truman NHS

7-27-87  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director, Midwest Region

5/1/87  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to express our appreciation to the following people who helped in the development of this project.

Alan O'Bright  
Ron Cockrell  
Steve Harrison  
Lisa Houston  
Tom Richter  
Pauline Testerman  
Janet Bruce  
Pat Hininger  
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## CONTENTS

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List of Illustrations	viii
Index of Drawings	x
I. BUILDING CHRONOLOGY -- TRUMAN HOME (HS-01)	1
Notes	11
Illustrations	13
Building Chronology Drawings (Sheets 1-3)	
II. EXISTING CONDITIONS -- TRUMAN HOME (HS-01)	27
Introduction	27
Architecture and Engineering Team	27
Scope of National Park Service Work	28
Building Description and Analysis	29
Landscape	31
Topography	31
Vegetation	31
Walkways and Driveways	32
Fences	33
Miscellaneous Structures and Archeological Remains	33
Environmental Considerations	34
Underground Utilities	35
Foundation	35
First Floor Framing and Condition	37
First Floor General Condition	43
Porches	46
Second Floor Sleeping Porch	49
Second Floor Framing and Condition	50
Attic Floor Framing and Condition	53
Roof Framing and Conditions	54
Attic Roof	54
Attic Dormers	55
Kitchen Wing Roof	56
Roofing Materials	56
Wall System Framing	57
Exterior and Interior Stair Systems	59
Exterior Envelope	60
Windows	60
Doors	62
Exterior Finishes	62
Interior Finishes	64
Plumbing Services and Systems	67
Waste and Vent System	68

## CONTENTS -- 2

---

Gas System	68
Historic (c. 1885) System	68
Existing System	69
Heating System	69
Historic	69
Ductwork	70
Gas Yard Lamp and Interior Gas Fixtures	71
Ventilation System	72
Air-Conditioning System	72
Historic	72
Non-Historic	73
Electrical Service and Systems	73
Lightning Protection System	75
Security and Fire Detection Systems	76
Communication Systems	77
Notes	79
Illustrations	83
Existing Condition Drawings (Sheets 1-55)	
 III. EXISTING CONDITIONS -- TRUMAN CARRIAGE HOUSE (HS-02)	97
Introduction and Description	97
Topography	97
Foundation Wall	98
Foundation Sills	99
Garage Floor	100
Floor/Ceiling System Framing	100
Roof System Framing	101
Roofing Materials	102
Wall System Framing	103
Exterior Envelope and Finishes	104
Windows	106
Doors	108
Interior Finishes	108
Electrical Service and Systems	109
Security Systems	110
Historic Security System	110
Notes	111
Illustrations	113
Existing Condition Drawings (Sheets 1-11)	

## CONTENTS -- 3

---

IV. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Truman Home (HS-01)	119
Introduction	119
Recommendations for Restoration Work	120
Topography	120
Vegetation	121
Pavements	121
Foundation	121
Roof	121
Floors	122
Plaster	122
Tile	124
Temperature and Humidity Control	124
Lincrusta	124
Plumbing System	124
Electrical System	125
Heating and Cooling System	126
Evaluation of Visitor Impact	126
Recommendations (Vistor Impact)	127
Evaluation of Energy Conservation Measures	128
Evaluation of Handicapped Access	128
Permanent Ramp	128
Portable Ramp	129
Stair Trac	129
Wheelchair Lift	130
Recommendations for Handicapped Access	130
Stair Trac	130
Portable Ramp	131
Wheelchair Lift	131
Recommendations for Further Research	132
Historical Research	132
Floor/Ceiling System Framing	132
Wall Structural Systems	132
Wallpaper	133
Investigation of Structure of Stair to Second Floor	134
Site Archeology at Foundation Walls	134
Cost Estimate	135

## CONTENTS -- 4

---

Truman Carriage House (HS-02)	
Introduction	137
Recommendations for Restoration Work	137
Topography	137
Vegetation	138
Foundation and Structural Posts	138
Wall System Framing	139
Roof Systems	139
Floor/Ceiling Structural Systems	140
Building Envelope	140
Exterior/Interior Finishes	142
Security System	142
Recommendations for Further Research	142
Cost Estimate	143
Notes	145

## APPENDICES

A. National Park Service Reports and Fabric Analysis	147
B. Chronological List of Work Completed by the National Park Service	149
C. Anticipated Work by the National Park Service	151
D. List of Site Structures	153
E. Maps	159
F. Wall Systems. Excerpts from "Physical Investigation Report, Truman Home," July 24-26, 1984	171
G. Post Base Conditions. Excerpts from "Physical Investigation Report and Treatment Proposal, Truman Carriage House," April, 1986	185
H. Munsell Color Chart	199

BIBLIOGRAPHY	201
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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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<u>Fig.</u>	<u>Title</u>
1.1	Bird's Eye View of Independence. A. Ruger, 1868. Detail. Credit: Jackson County Historical Soceity
1.2	Truman Home. Construction detail of connection between main house and kitchen wing. Credit: Doug Wasama
1.3	Residence of George P. Gates. <u>Independence Sentinel</u> , Indepen- dence, Missouri, January 2, 1886. Credit: Harry S Truman Library (HSTL)
1.4	Truman Home, c. 1900. West elevation (looking east). One of a series of the earliest extant photographs of the structure. Note the absence of the roof line decorative grillwork as shown in the 1886 <u>Independence Sentinel</u> . Credit: HSTL
1.5	Truman Home, c. 1905. Porch, northwest elevation (looking southeast). Bess Wallace Truman sitting on the original porch balustrade. Credit: HSTL
1.6	Truman Home, c. 1900. Southeast elevation (looking northeast). Two unidentified men standing in front of the rear porch that was converted to a bathroom c. 1907-1910. Credit: HSTL
1.7	Truman Home, c. 1940. East elevation (looking west). The 1920's pergola is pictured to the right of the rear porch. Credit: HSTL
1.8	Truman Home, July 11, 1944. West elevation (looking east). Before 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL
1.9	Truman Home, July 22, 1944. West elevation (looking southeast). Detail showing condition of home prior to 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL
1.10	Truman Home, May 21, 1945. West elevation (looking southeast). Workers begin renovation. Credit: HSTL
1.11	Truman Home, June 27, 1945. West elevation (looking east). After 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS -- 2

---

<u>Fig.</u>	<u>Title</u>
2.1	Truman Home, February-March 1986. West elevation (looking east). Credit: Zoom Studios
2.2	Truman Home, February-March 1986. North elevation (looking south). Credit: Zoom Studios
2.3	Truman Home, February-March 1986. East elevation (looking west). Credit: Zoom Studios
2.4	Truman Home, February-March 1986. South elevation (looking north). Credit: Zoom Studios
2.5	Topographical Survey Site Map, Harry S Truman National Historic Site. May 27, 1986, revised July 2, 1986. Credit: The Tuttle-Ayers-Woodward Company
2.6	Brick Nogging, Truman Home. North elevation, July, 1984. Credit: National Park Service, Midwest Region
3.1	Truman Carriage House, Fall 1985. North elevation (looking south). Credit: Zoom Studios
3.2	Truman Carriage House, Fall 1985. South elevation (looking north). Credit: Zoom Studios
3.3	Truman Carriage House, Fall 1985. East elevation (looking west). Credit: Zoom Studios
3.4	Truman Carriage House, Fall 1985. West elevation (looking east). Credit: Zoom Studios
3.5	Sill Beam at Post #17, Truman Carriage House. December 1985. West elevation. Credit: National Park Service, Midwest Region

## INDEX OF DRAWINGS

---

### Building Chronology - Truman Home (HS-01)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
1.	1867 - 1885
2.	1885 - 1910
3.	1910 - 1982

### Existing Conditions - Truman Home (HS-01)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
1.	Title Sheet
2.	General Information
3.	Topographical Site Plan
4.	Foundation/Basement Plan
5.	First Floor Plan
6.	Second Floor Plan
7.	Attic Floor Plan
8.	Roof Plan
9.	First Floor Framing Plan
10.	Second Floor Framing Plan
11.	Attic Floor Framing Plan
12.	Roof Framing Plan & Widows Walk Rafter Plan
13.	Exterior Elevation - North
14.	Exterior Elevation - West

INDEX OF DRAWINGS -- 2

---

Existing Conditions - Truman Home (HS-01) (continued)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
15.	Exterior Elevation - South
16.	Exterior Elevaton - East
17.	Building Section looking North through Living Room and Stairwell
18.	Building Section looking West through Gates Bedroom and Dining Room
19.	Building Section looking South through Kitchen, Library and Music Room
20.	Building Section looking East through Music Room, Foyer and Living Room
21.	Interior Elevation Basement
22.	Interior Elevation First Floor
23.	Interior Elevation First Floor
24.	Interior Elevation First Floor
25.	Interior Elevation Second Floor
26.	Interior Elevation Second Floor
27.	Interior Elevation Second Floor
28.	Interior Elevation Attic
29.	Detail Section through North Wall
30.	Detail Section through South Wall
31.	Framing Details

INDEX OF DRAWINGS -- 3

---

Existing Conditions - Truman Home (HS-01) (continued)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
32.	Exterior Elevation Detail Above West Bay
33.	Exterior Elevation Detail Above North Bay
34.	Exterior Details Woodwork & Trim @ Kitchen Porch
35.	Exterior Details Woodwork & Trim @ Front & South Porch
36.	Miscellaneous Special Exterior Details of Brackets
37.	Door Details
38.	Window Details
39.	Stair Details
40.	Door and Window Moulding Profiles
41.	Miscellaneous Moulding Profiles
42.	Window Schedule
43.	Door Schedule
44.	Interior Finish Schedule
45.	Mechanical Schedule and Plumbing Riser Diagram
46.	Basement Mechanical Plan
47.	Basement Piping Supply Systems Plan
48.	Basement Piping Waste Systems Plan
49.	First Floor Mechanical/Piping Systems Plan
50.	Second Floor Mechanical/Piping Systems Plan

## INDEX OF DRAWINGS -- 4

---

### Existing Conditions - Truman Home (HS-01) (continued)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
51.	Attic Floor Mechanical/Piping Systems Plan
52.	Basement Electrical Systems
53.	First Floor Electrical Systems
54.	Second Floor Electrical Systems
55.	Attic Floor Electrical Systems

### Existing Conditions - Truman Carriage House (HS-02)

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
1.	Footing/Foundation Plan, Ground Floor Plan & Loft Plan
2.	Roof Plan
3.	Loft Floor Framing & Roof Framing Plan
4.	Exterior Elevation East & West
5.	Exterior Elevation South
6.	Exterior Elevation North
7.	Longitudinal Section looking South
8.	Transverse Section looking East
9.	Interior Elevation Ground Floor
10.	Interior Elevation Loft Floor
11.	Framing & Exterior Details

## I. Building Chronology -- Truman Home (HS-01)

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The Truman Home (HS-01) and Truman Carriage House (HS-02), 219 North Delaware Street, Independence, Missouri, are on lots 2 and 3 of James F. Moore's Addition. Moore's Addition was platted on September 29, 1847. Soon after the 1849 town incorporation, Moore's Addition was included in Independence.<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix E (e), Map of Independence, 1877.)

James F. Moore, an Independence merchant, purchased approximately forty acres and a portion of Town Lot 38 from Cornelius Davy on August 3, 1839, for \$5,000.00.<sup>2</sup> A year prior to the 1849 incorporation of Independence, Moore, through power of attorney, sold off his property, lot by lot.<sup>3</sup>

On August 28, 1848, lots 2 through 6, 8 and 16 through 18 of James F. Moore's Addition were sold to William B. Hay. The nine lots were purchased for \$800.00.<sup>4</sup>

In August of 1850, shortly after Hay's business failed, Jackson County Clerk Samuel A. Lucas "issued a writ of fieri facias against William Hay to compensate Hay's creditors."<sup>5</sup> The writ authorized Sheriff George W. Buchanan to advertise Hay's property in advance of selling it at public auction. On September 11, 1850, lots 2 and 3 of Moore's Addition were sold to Independence Mayor Jonathan R. Palmer for \$220.00.<sup>6</sup>

Like Hay, Jonathan Palmer suffered from debts. Three weeks after the auction, on October 2, Palmer mortgaged all his property to John B. Slaughter for a \$6,000.00 bond. After Palmer defaulted on the bond, Slaughter, a merchant and Palmer's successor as mayor, received legal title to lots 2 through 5 of Moore's Addition. After the Slaughter family moved to St. Louis, they sold their property to James T. Thorton and Francis Hord for \$500.00 on February 2, 1857.<sup>7</sup>

Through public auctions and trustee's deeds, lots 2 and 3 changed hands a number of times because of debt-plagued property owners.

James T. and Mary H. Thorton, on November 29, 1859, deeded lots 2 and 3 to Peter Gastel for \$350.00. In debt, the Gastels were forced into a three party trustee's deed, with William Chrisman as middleman. Chrisman had paid the Gastels one dollar for lots 2 and 3 to hold in trust for one year (until November 20, 1861). If the debt went unpaid, Chrisman was authorized to sell lots 2 and 3 at public auction.<sup>8</sup>

Interrupted by the events of the Civil War, William Chrisman was prevented from carrying out the provisions of the 1860s trustee's deed, until September 26, 1866, when lots 2 and 3 were sold at auction to James G. English for \$425.00.<sup>9</sup>

Then, through a series of complex and shrewd business transactions, George P. Gates (the grandfather of Bess Wallace Truman), a recent

settler from Illinois, paid \$700.00 for both lots (2 and 3), on June 20, 1867.<sup>10</sup> To accommodate his family, there is evidence that in the same year, Gates built a two-story, rectangular structure with a small rear addition.<sup>11</sup> (See Fig. 1.1 and Building Chronology Drawings.)

Resembling the massing of a two-story American I-House, the 1867 structure is shown with a medium-hip roof. Recent investigation at the west end of the old attic (301) revealed extant framing of a hip roof with painted fascia board and remnants of a built-in sheet metal gutter. Thus, the east wall of Truman dressing room (209) and hall (208) was originally an exterior wall. The smaller kitchen wing (kitchen 113, pantry 112, butler's pantry 111) is shown with a shallow-pitched, gable roof. A September, 1986 physical investigation revealed that the kitchen wing (113) was balloon framed at the floor joists, north wall. In addition, there is evidence of an intermediate kitchen partition. Presumably, the kitchen wing was constructed as a one-story or one-and-one-half story addition with the roof altered to its existing height and configuration in the remodeling of 1885. (See Fig. 1.2.)

As a prominent and successful Independence businessman who had made his fortune from "Queen of the Pantry Flour," George P. Gates decided to construct a sizable "addition" to his home at 219 North Delaware. (See Fig. 1.3 and Appendix E (f), 1886 map.) Designed by builder and architect James W. Adams for \$8,000.00, the house was the most expensive residence built in Independence in 1885.<sup>12</sup> (See Fig. 1.4.) Adams'



two-and-one-half story frame Victorian "addition" to the existing 1867 structure included at the first floor level: living room (104), bedroom (105), vestibule (101), and portions of the central hall (103) and dining room (110).

The second floor level included: master bedroom (204), Truman bedroom (205), storage room (213), alcove (201), and portions of the central hall (202) and bedroom (210).

The 1867 wing (which was damaged by a fire that occurred after 1885) remained a kitchen area (113) on the first floor. In all probability, its second floor space (213) was converted into a sewing room/sitting room during Bess Truman's childhood and early married life. It later became a storage area sometime after Elizabeth Gates' death in 1924.<sup>13</sup>

Porches included at the first floor elevation: 104B, 114A, B and C, 101A, and a porch which is now occupied by bathroom 106 and porch 107A. (See Fig. 1.5.)

Recent findings that show physical evidence of the two different periods of construction previously discussed (1867 and 1885) involve the investigation of building materials and techniques, and conclusions drawn from a paint analysis.

Based upon the most recent assumptions of the building's chronology,

several sections of exterior walls of the Truman home were removed and studied. It was found that the east wall of the kitchen wing (113) is constructed of brick nogging without sheathing and uses poplar siding. Samplings from other wall portions, i.e. thin flat studs with sheathing using pine siding, reveal a later period of construction. This sample was taken from the 1885 section of the Truman home. (For further information, see Physical Investigation Report, Truman Home, July, 1984.)

Framing systems and stratigraphies of exterior paint layers also vary with construction dates. While the 1867 portion of the home uses a let-in system of framing, the 1885 portion does not. In addition, the oldest extant siding appears to be on the 1867 structure. The stratigraphies found in samples from the 1867 portion show the greatest number of paint layers -- approximately twenty-three. Paint samples extracted from the 1885 section verify that date.

After marrying David Wallace on June 13, 1883, Margaret (Madge) Gates (George Gates' oldest daughter), claimed 219 Delaware as their address for an unknown period during the late 1880s. Then in 1904, one year after David Wallace committed suicide, Madge and her four children (Bess, Frank, George and Fred) permanently moved into the Gates' mansion.<sup>14</sup>

With this new arrangement, Madge could care for her aging parents. George P. and Elizabeth moved to the first floor bedroom where the

southeast porch (106) was converted into a bathroom. (See Fig. 1.6.) This occurred between 1907 and 1910.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a southeast section of porch was added to kitchen porches 114A and 114B, and a sleeping porch (206) was included at the second-story level.<sup>16</sup>

For almost a century, the home at 219 North Delaware basically remained the same. Only minor alterations were made to fit the needs of the extended family that shared the home. After Bess Wallace and Harry Truman were married in 1919, a year after the death of George Gates, they, too, established their residence at 219 Delaware.<sup>17</sup>

In 1924, after the birth of President and Mrs. Truman's daughter, Mary Margaret, a passageway (206A) was built connecting the Truman's bedroom (205) with the bedroom (210) of their new child.<sup>18</sup> A portion of the second floor sleeping porch was used for the passageway. Also constructed during the 1920s was a backyard pergola (HS-04).<sup>19</sup> (See Fig. 1.7.)

For more than a decade---from the time that Harry Truman won the 1934 Democratic nomination for the United States Senate until 1945 when he became the thirty-third President of the United States---the house at 219 North Delaware was neglected. Although minor in nature, there were several household repairs accomplished, yet by the spring of 1945, the property was in need of major renovation.<sup>20</sup> (See Figs. 1.8 and 1.9.)

Concerned about the appearance of her family home, Bess Truman made arrangements to begin exterior renovation of "The Summer White House" as it was then called. (See Figs. 1.10 and 1.11.) Work at 219 North Delaware included replacing rotted millwork and slate shingles, covering the worn, grey exterior with white paint, and trim areas with Kentucky green.<sup>21</sup> The second floor bath (211) was also remodeled with a new blue porcelain tub, stool, and sink.

The only physical change to the Truman home during the presidential years was the rear porch construction (114A and B). In April 1950, this porch was refloored and extended to the east by six additional feet, supported by brick piers, and screened-in (114C).<sup>22</sup> Based on evidence from paint trim samples, it appears that the last porch extension may have been partially constructed with reused materials from the earlier rear east porch.<sup>23</sup>

In January, 1953, one month after the death of Madge Gates Wallace, Harry and Bess Truman left Washington D.C. as private citizens. The former first family then returned to 219 North Delaware and purchased the home in July.<sup>24</sup> That same year, the Trumans began to make repairs and conduct interior changes to their home. This "modernization" included: wallpapering first and second floor rooms; construction of attic storage space; construction of cabinets in the east wall of Mrs. Truman's dressing room; wall-to-wall carpeting throughout the first floor (except the kitchen); and extensive interior painting.<sup>25</sup> In

addition, shelves were constructed in the library (109) sometime during the 1950s.

In 1954, the old cement floor in the basement's utility area was excavated. Originally, this area was elevated four inches from the remainder of the basement. To permit an increase in headroom and to repair plumbing, an additional four inches was excavated for the base of the new concrete floor.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, a few minor alterations were made to the Truman home. The original slate roof was replaced with grey fiberglass asphalt shingles in July, 1969.<sup>27</sup> The rotted front steps (non-original) were replaced, and the rotted balusters on the north side were also replaced, c. 1974.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the damaged pergola which had been reconstructed in 1944, was removed, c. 1970.<sup>29</sup> In December, 1981, the main chimney was tuckpointed.<sup>30</sup>

On February 23, 1972, 219 North Delaware was designated a National Historic Landmark by the United States Department of the Interior and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Following the death of Mr. Truman, the City of Independence, with the full support of his widow, established the Harry S. Truman Heritage District. (More commonly known as the Harry S. Truman Historic District.)<sup>31</sup>

Following the death of Mrs. Bess Truman on October 18, 1982, the

dictates of her will left the property to "The United States of America to be held and operated by it under the direction of the Archivist of the United States, in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Library."<sup>32</sup>

Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt signed Designation Order No. 3088 declaring 219 North Delaware the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Under the auspices of the National Park Service, the property became the Twenty-seventh Presidential Site in the National Park System, on December 12, 1982.<sup>33</sup>

## Notes to Chapter One

1. Ron Cockrell, Historic Structures Report: History and Significance. Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1984), 11. Hereafter cited as "HSR."

2. Ibid., 10.

3. Ibid., 11.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 12.

6. Ibid. It has been suggested that because of the increase in value of lots 2 and 3 (coupled with the fact that with his indebtedness, Hay also lost his home), a structure could have been present on the site as early as 1848. Although the theory speculates that the east wing (the kitchen wing) of the Truman home was built prior to 1850 (and later incorporated into the Gates' mansion), recent findings suggest otherwise. The following items have been observed and strongly indicate that the east wing was built concurrently or as an addition to the 1867 structure: 1) the sill beam of the 1867 main house is located to the east edge of the east foundation 2) the wall between the kitchen and dining room has brick nogging 3) the floor in the kitchen wing expands beyond the first joist. In addition, it was found that the earliest paint sample taken from the east wall of the kitchen wing dates 1867.

7. Ibid., 14.

8. Ron Cockrell, Historic Resource Study: The Trumans of Independence, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri (Omaha: National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1985), 16. Hereafter cited as "HRS."

9. HSR., 16-17.

10. Ibid., 18.

11. HRS., 24. George P. and Elizabeth E. Gates probably came to Independence from Illinois in the spring of 1867, or according to a local historian, perhaps George P. Gates came alone to the area to investigate the property. His family (in 1866 in Illinois, Elizabeth had a baby, Myra) could have joined him at a later date. In addition, it is also known that Gates' father and mother were living in Independence in 1866, so it is possible that George P. Gates resided with his parents until their home was built.

It is also important to note that A. Ruger, the artist of Bird's Eye View of Independence came to the area in 1867. The date of publication was not more than one year after the artwork was finished. From this information, one can conclude that when Ruger came to Independence, the

1867 Gates' home was underway or already completed. For information on Ruger see: John W. Reys, Views and Viewmakers in Urban America 1825-195. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984.

12. HSR., 30-31.

13. Ibid., 93.

14. Ibid., 47-48.

15. Ibid., 48.

16. Ibid., 152.

17. Ibid., 74.

18. Ibid., 76.

19. Ibid., 88.

20. Ibid., 115.

21. Ibid., 116.

22. Ibid., 132, 152.

23. Marie Carden, "Paint Analysis and Recommendations for the Harry S Truman Home National Historic Site, Independence, Missouri" (North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, National Park Service, Boston, MA, May, 1986, photocopied), 12. It is important to note that at the time of this writing, the information in this reference concerning the kitchen wing and porch is in error.

24. HSR., 178.

25. Ibid., 185-88.

26. Ibid., 198.

27. Ibid., 266.

28. Ibid., 287.

29. Ibid., 258.

30. Ibid., 288.

31. Ibid., 292.

32. Ibid., 295.

33. Ibid.



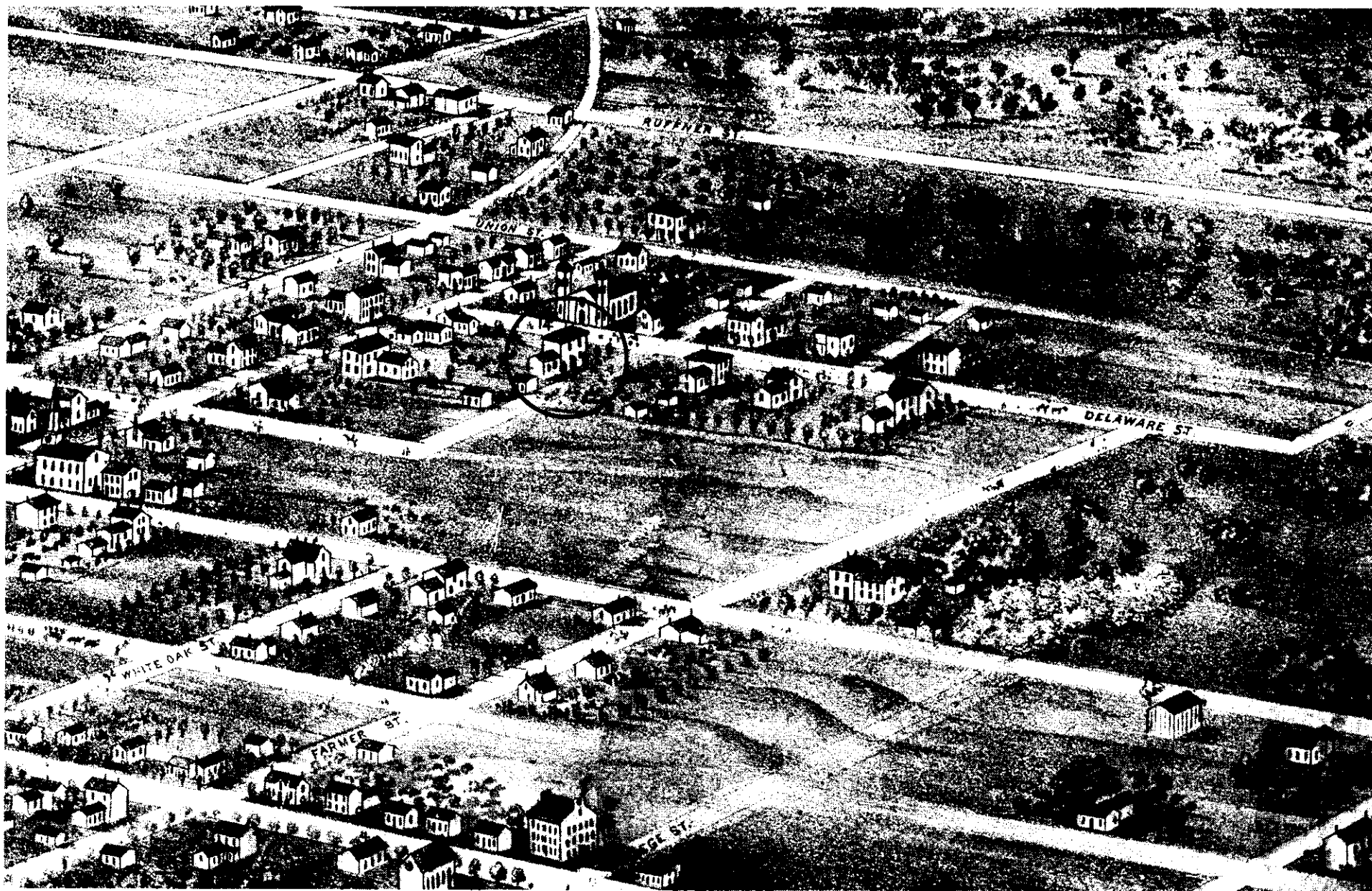


Fig. 1.1 Bird's Eye View of Independence. A. Ruger, 1868. Detail. Credit: Jackson County Historical Society

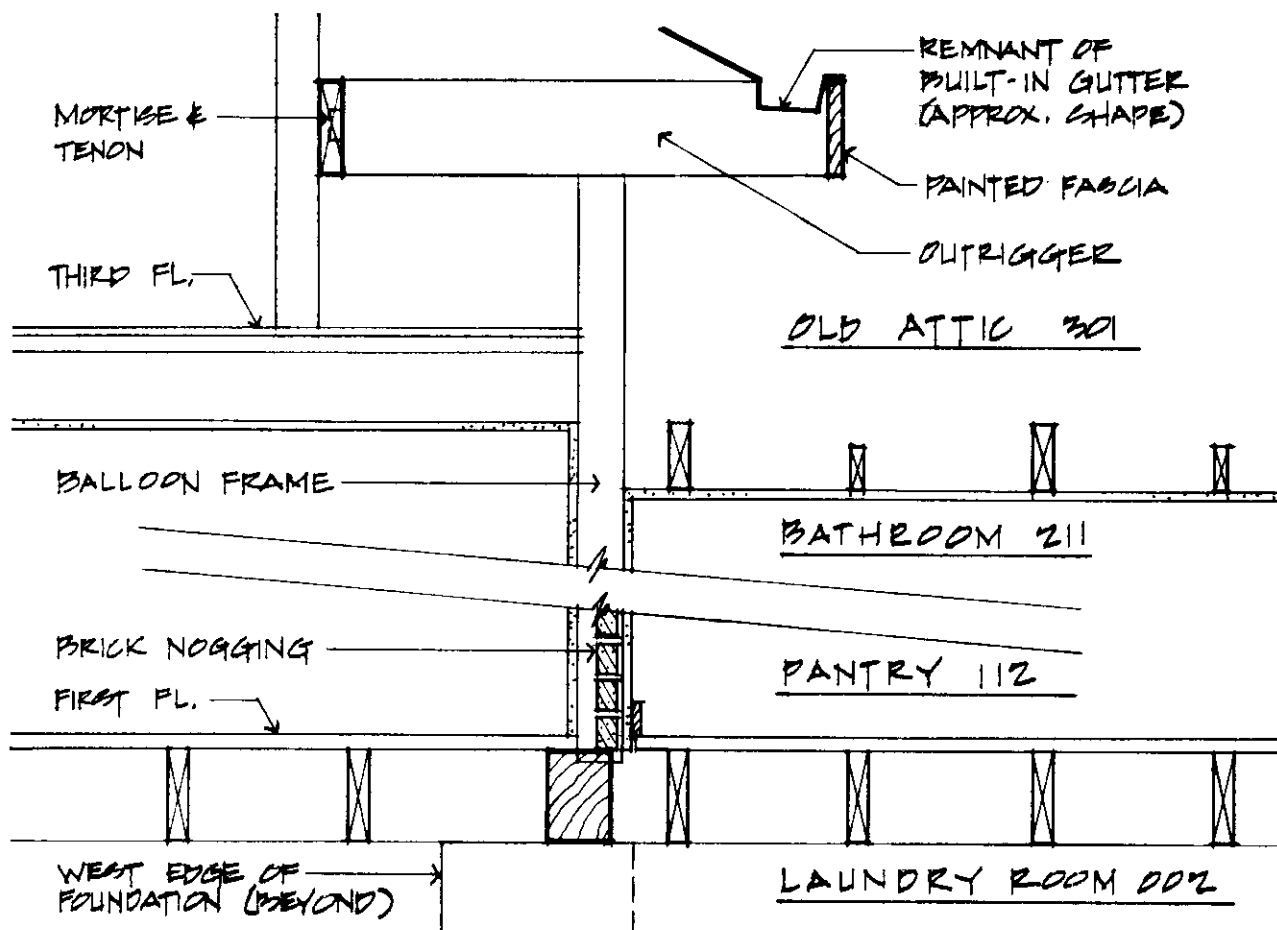
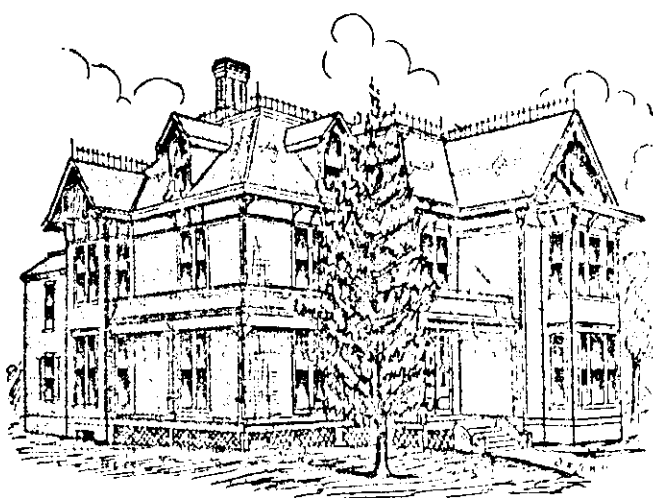


Fig. 1.2 Truman Home. Construction detail of connection between main house and kitchen wing. Credit: Doug Wasama



RESIDENCE OF GEO. P. GATES.

Fig. 1.3 Residence of George P. Gates. Independence Sentinel, Independence, Missouri, January 2, 1886. Credit: Harry S Truman Library (HSTL)



Fig. 1.4 Truman Home, c. 1900. West elevation (looking east). One of a series of the earliest extant photographs of the structure. Note the absence of the roof line decorative grillwork as shown in the 1886 Independence Sentinel. Credit: HSTL

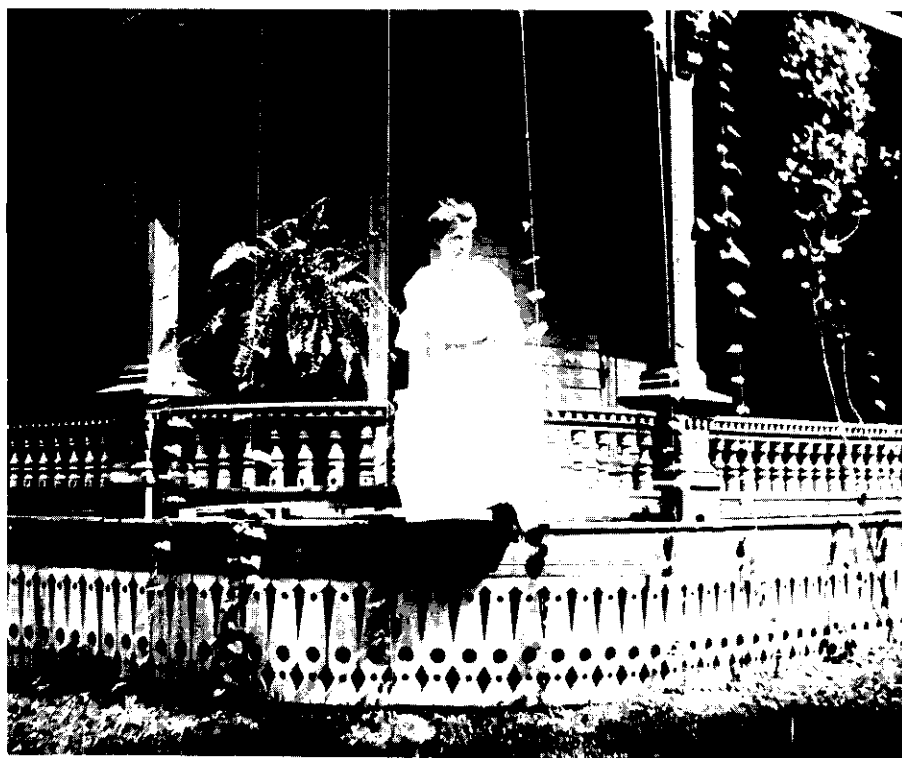


Fig. 1.5 Truman Home, c. 1905. Porch, northwest elevation (looking southeast). Bess Wallace Truman sitting on the original porch balustrade. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.6 Truman Home, c. 1900. Southeast elevation (looking northeast). Two unidentified men standing in front of the rear porch that was converted to a bathroom c. 1907-1910. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.7 Truman Home, c. 1940. East elevation (looking west). The 1920s pergola is pictured to the right of the rear porch. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.8 Truman Home, July 11, 1944. West elevation (looking east). Before 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.9 Truman Home, July 22, 1944. West elevation (looking southeast). Detail showing condition of home prior to 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.10 Truman Home, May 21, 1945. West elevation (looking southeast). Workers begin renovation. Credit: HSTL



Fig. 1.11 Truman Home, June 27, 1945. West elevation (looking east). After 1945 renovation. Credit: HSTL

**Truman Road**

**Delaware Street**

**HS-01**

